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ABSTRACT

A discussion among school and business leaders in Seattle (Washington) revealed that no one had a clear picture of the total community effort in support of schools or the external resources schools actually needed. The Program on Reinventing Public Education of the University of Washington conducted a study to determine how external resources were being distributed in the Seattle schools and whether these resources were meeting the needs of schools. School principals were surveyed in 1995 about the 1994-95 school year. The survey asked about funds from Seattle's Families and Education Levy, but did not ask about funds raised from sources within the school, such as a Parent Teacher Association. Survey results showed the immense scale and variety of external resources provided to Seattle schools. The Families and Education Levy alone provided over five million dollars in the school year, and was hailed by principals as indispensable to their schools. Local businesses offered multiple resources. In fact, public sector programs, grants, and contributions made up 49% of the dollar value of services available to Seattle public schools, and another 10% of the total dollar value of resources came from one private grant to a single high school. The remaining 41% came from local private sources in the form of 321 separate programs and services. Many of these were transient; almost half identified in a 1991 study of private contributions had disappeared by the 1995 survey. Researchers found that the overall distribution of these resources appeared to be random and unrelated to goals and strategies for school improvement and student achievement. (Contains three figures.) (SLD)

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April 1996

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Introduction

Businesses, professional organizations, community groups, and foundations give millions of dollars worth of goods and services to public schools each year in the form of thousands of volunteer hours, hundreds of book bags, and dozens of assemblies and field trips. All of these are helpful to teachers and principals, and represent genuine good will between the community and schools. But how are these resources distributed? Do schools with the highest needs receiving the most contributions? Or is "random acts of kindness" a more accurate description of the relationship between Seattle's business community and Seattle public schools?

School officials and business leaders met in March, 1995 to examine the role of external funding in school improvement and to discuss more effective ways that businesses and foundations could help Seattle public schools achieve their overall goals. The discussion revealed that no one had a clear picture of the total community effort in support of the schools, or of what the district and individual schools needed.

With financial support from The Boeing Company, the University of Washington's Program on Reinventing Public Education set out to determine how external resources were being distributed and whether these resources were meeting the needs of schools. Researchers surveyed Seattle public school principals in the Spring and Summer of 1995, and asked about all programs, funds, and services schools received during the 1994-95 school year from sources other than the state and the school district. The survey included contributions from Seattle's Families and Education Levy, but did not ask about funds raised from sources within a school, such as the PTA. Researchers found that the overall distribution of these resources appeared to be random and unrelated to the goals and strategies for school improvement and student achievement.

Survey Results

Survey results showed the immense scale and variety of external resources provided to Seattle schools. The Seattle Families and Education Levy alone provided over five million dollars during the 1994-95 academic year and was uniformly hailed by principals as being indispensable to their schools. Local businesses, from the very smallest neighborhood grocery store to Washington Mutual and The Boeing Company, offered resources ranging

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from refreshments at school celebrations to complex community building programs involving tutoring, mentoring, and community-home-school linkages. Service organizations such as Rotary and Kiwanis, clubs such as the Chess Federation and the Audobon Society, and non-profit organizations like Powerful Schools all contributed people and programs. National foundations also made important contributions, led by a large curriculum development grant from the McDonnell Douglas Corporation to a cooperative venture between Roosevelt High School and the University of Washington.

Public sector programs, grants, and contributions made up 49% of the dollar value of services available to the Seattle public schools in 1994-95. Another 10% of the total dollar value of resources came from one private out-of-state grant to a single high school. The remaining 41% came from local private sources in the form of 321 separate programs and grants.

Funds from large public sector programs were distributed according to need-based formulas to virtually all schools. Most individual private sector programs were much smaller, and typically focused on one or two schools. Many of these private sector contributions were one-time offerings for assemblies, field trips, books, and equipment. A few private programs established larger long-term relationships between the donor and a particular school. These provided, for example, volunteer tutors, transportation for field trips, and on-going instructional programs. A small number of organizations provided wide-ranging services to groups of schools. For example, Powerful Schools (supported by funds from the Meyer Foundation and other companies and foundations) assisted five Central Area elementary schools with parent outreach, teacher training and instructional enrichment, community-building, child care, and social services.

Many contributions provided by private sources were transient; almost one-half of the resources identified in a 1991 study of private sector contributions had disappeared by the 1995 survey.

Types of Resources

The University of Washington researchers developed a simple typology of contributed resources to show how schools direct external resources.

Figure 1: Typology of Private Sector Resources

Educational core: additional teachers or substitutes while teachers receive training; teacher training programs; classroom texts and equipment; and student assessment materials.

Academic support: tutoring, supplementary classes, books, and other materials that reinforce a school's instructional program.

Direct social and health services: counseling, health care, psychological treatment, and other services intended to ameliorate problems in students' lives.

Enrichment: assemblies, field trips, and brief courses on subjects not normally covered by the school's regular instructional program (e.g., chess, environmental management, flying lessons).

Linking services: community-school or family-school liaisons, volunteer coordinators, fund-raising, and other brokerage between the school and potential sources of assistance.

Combination programs: programs that have both academic support and direct social service components, usually addressing multiple needs within a school.

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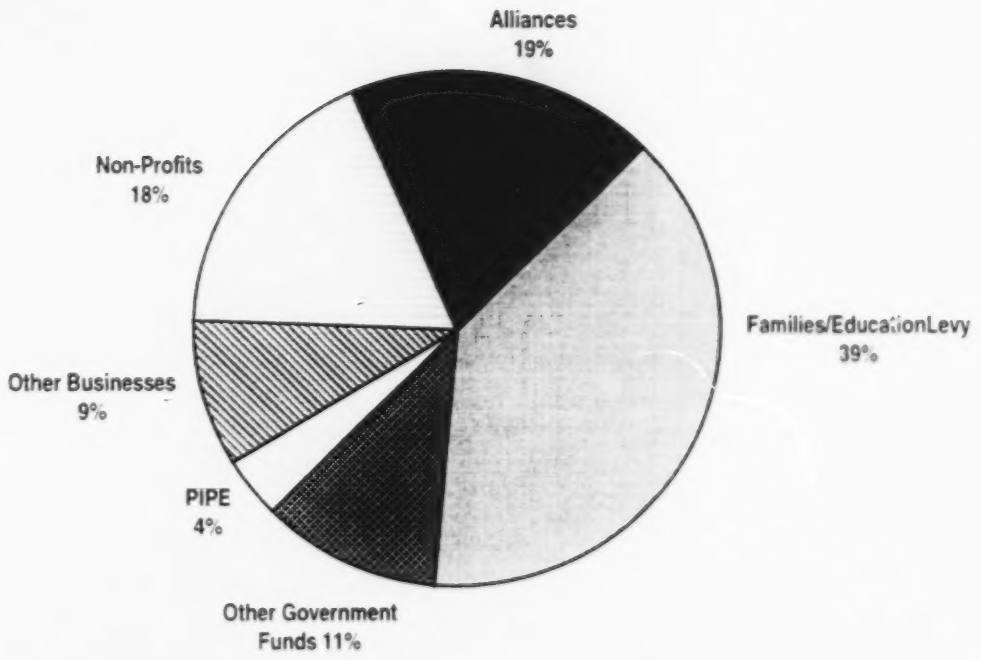
Distribution of Resources

None of the major local donors (including governmental sources) provided significant assistance directed towards a school's instructional core. As Figure 2 shows, Seattle's Families and Education Levy provided social and health services (including large numbers of counselors and school nurses) and linking services (community-school liaisons and volunteer coordinators). A number of schools have been able to redirect Levy money to hire instructional aides and reduce adult/student ratios in classrooms. Private sector funding emphasized academic support, particularly tutoring and enrichment, frequently in the form of assemblies and field trips.

Figure 2: Distribution of Private Sector Resources by Funding Source and Program Emphasis



Resource Type	Seattle Levy		Other Gov't		PIPE*		Non-PIPE**		Alliances***		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Educational core	16	5.3	9	18.0	2	2.7	34	13.2	2	10.0	63	9.0
Academic Support	6	2.0	3	6.0	32	42.7	74	28.8	1	5.0	116	16.5
Social services	163	54.2	7	14.0	2	2.7	46	17.9	0	0.0	218	31.0
Linking services	116	38.5	5	10.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	20.0	125	17.8
Enrichment	0	0.0	23	46.0	39	52.0	102	39.7	5	25.0	169	24.0
Combination	0	0.0	3	6.0	0	0.0	1	0.4	8	40.0	12	1.7
Total	301	42.8	50	7.1	75	10.7	257	36.6	20	2.8	703	100.0

*PIPE: Partners in Public Education (Seattle Chamber of Commerce)
**Business contributions from sources other than PIPE
***Alliances: organizations providing comprehensive assistance to two or more schools (e.g., Powerful Schools)

Division of Resources

How were private sector resources distributed across school types (elementary, middle, secondary) and levels of need? Figure 3 shows that elementary schools in general received a far higher per student contribution than did either middle or high schools. The per student contributions to elementary schools averaged $115, but the amounts received by individual schools varied greatly, from zero dollars to over $1,100. Eleven elementary schools reported receiving no assistance from private sector companies, organizations, or clubs during the 1994-95 school year, while two schools reported receiving resources from more than 87 outside contributors.

The total number of private sector contributions received by high schools was greater than those received by elementary or middle schools, but the larger size of the high schools meant the per student dollar value was considerably lower. The average per capita contribution across high schools was $49, with a range from $7 to $105 per student. The number of contributors per school ranged from one to 18, with an average of nine per school.

Middle schools received more resources per school from the private sector than elementary schools, but they received a lower per student dollar level than either elementary or high schools. The per capita dollar value ranged from $9 to $70, with an average of $36 per student. The number of contributors per middle school ranged from three to seven, with an average of five.

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Figure 3: Distribution of Private Sector Resources by Type of School

Type of School	Number of schools	Average enrollment	Percent of "high need" schools	Dollar value of resources per school	Dollar value of resources per student	Average number of resources per school	Range (# of resources)
ELEMENTARY	60	348	31.7%	$36,980	$114.56	2.40	0-10
Central	14	336	50.0%	$52,436	$193.57	3.14	1-10
Northeast	9	365	0.0%	$4,694	$13.90	1.22	0-5
Northwest	14	370	0.0%	$11,496	$31.84	1.92	0-5
Southeast	12	314	83.3%	$85,254	$245.39	3.20	1-8
Southwest	11	362	18.2%	$23,492	$58.90	2.10	0-8
High need	19	303		$71,854	$234.33	3.58	1-10
Medium need	24	362		$28,356	$81.33	1.96	0-8
Low need	17	380		$10,058	$27.60	1.71	0-5
MIDDLE	10	881	30.0%	$31,455	$36.04	5.10	3-7
High need	3	781		$39,833	$51.06	5.30	4-7
Medium need	4	822		$29,275	$32.89	4.25	3-6
Low need	3	1,057		$25,983	$25.21	6.00	6-6
SECONDARY	10	1,159	30.0%	$51,928	$48.97	9.00	5-18
High need	3	838		$54,150	$65.39	5.30	5-6
Medium need	4	1,169		$55,246	$47.46	11.50	7-18
Low need	3	1,468		$45,283	$34.57	9.30	5-14
ALTERNATIVE	15	228	N.A.	$47,810	$209.96	3.10	0-7
TOTAL	**95**	**470**	**31.2%**	**$39,682**	**$96.54**	**3.55**	**0-18**

Meeting Schools' Needs

Researchers analyzed contributions according to school need, as measured by percentages of at-risk students. Comparisons across need groups revealed that high need schools as a group received the largest number of contributions and the highest dollar value of resources. However, many high need schools received little support. Among high need elementary schools, private sector contributions ranged from $6 per student to over $1,100. When the five members of the Central Area Powerful Schools Coalition were removed from the high need group, the average per school contribution to schools in that group fell below the average for medium need schools.

Principals value the external resources they receive, and none would readily part with any form of assistance. However, when researchers asked what additional programs or resources they would request from external donors, principals responded differently according to the need level of their particular schools. Principals in low need schools were more likely than principals in medium or high need schools to cite requirements for social and linking services and for enrichment. Many principals in low need schools said they needed a full-time counselor, psychologist, or family support worker. Others asked for resources to support parent outreach and education, and ways to increase parent involvement.

High need schools were more likely to cite needs for additional teachers and teacher assistants. One principal wrote, in clear frustration, "This is nuts. We do not have basic anything." This principal said she wanted enrichment and extras, but only after the school had a solid instructional foundation. Another principal of a high need school pleaded for more cultural enrichment programs because the students, he said, "aren't exposed to even 'normal' experiences." Principals of high need schools were also more likely than principals of medium and low need schools to request additional training opportunities for teachers. A principal of a high need middle school called for "staff training and development; money for trainers; and time off for teachers to obtain special supports and experiences."

The existing mix of external resources fits the priorities expressed by principals in the low and medium need schools. It does not, however, touch the needs expressed by principals in high need schools for assistance with the basic instructional process and school-wide improvement or restructuring. Among high need schools, comprehensive improvement programs like Powerful Schools were seen as especially valuable in dealing with the home-social-academic support needs of students. Medium and low need schools were much less likely to cite needs for such programs.

Principals in all categories of schools acknowledged the imperative to increase student learning, and many were aware of new, higher statewide standards for academic achievement. A minority of principals expressed a clear vision of the needs of their students and ways to address these needs in light of increasing demands for school improvement. These principals, by and large, aggressively sought particular kinds of help for their schools.

A much larger number of principals, however, felt unable to affect the flow of external resources. In some cases they appeared to lack a clear picture of what their schools needed; in others, they simply did not know how to locate needed resources beyond what was available from district, state, or federal funds. Some of these principals had no external resources available to them at all, while others had resources that were peripheral, at best, to the needs of their students and teachers.

Implications

Businesses, foundations, community organizations, and clubs of all types in the Seattle area make sizable and important contributions to the city's public schools. However, the resources appear to be distributed haphazardly. Although high need schools do receive more resources on average, many individual schools are left with no significant external contributions. Many private sector funds are distributed on the basis of personal acquaintanceship or chance connections between individual businesses and school officials. Entrepreneurial principals also receive the lion's share of support for their schools. Many donors understandably want to help their neighborhood schools or associate themselves with principals who are strong leaders, but donors who want to help the schools with the greatest needs have no way to identify neglected schools or contribute to a specific district-wide improvement strategy.

All of Seattle's public schools, including those serving relatively advantaged students, can identify many unmet needs. In addition, few if any of the schools are prepared to meet the new State student performance standards which come into effect in the next three years. Clearly something must be done to match contributions with needs and to focus everyone's efforts on instructional improvement. Increased giving by external contributors might be part of the answer. But while current gifts are generous, no one can say how much will be enough.

For external resources to make a real, lasting difference in Seattle schools, two things are necessary. First, donors and principals need guidance that does not currently exist and can

come only from the School Board and Superintendent, in the form of a definite strategy and statement of priorities for improvement of each school. Second, donors need a related mechanism for setting their own priorities and coordinating allocations. These changes require a degree of clarity from the school system, and a level of public-private communication that is not happening in Seattle, or anywhere else in the country.

Present circumstances offer a unique opportunity for effective action. The school system has new leadership and the business community has a new mechanism in the Seattle Alliance for coordinating formerly unrelated efforts. As in other cities where the private sector is dedicated to helping the schools, Seattle's business and foundation communities are ready to move from "feel-good" donations of assemblies and pencil boxes to support for fundamental school reform. A serious partnership between school system leaders on one hand and the private sector on the other is needed to convert "random acts of kindness" into school improvement and student learning.

About the Author

Mary Beth Celio is Director of Research and Senior Partner at Northwest Decision resources and also serves as Director of Research for the Catholic Archdiocese of Seattle's Department of Planning and Research. She received her post-graduate training in research and statistics from the University of Maryland. Some of her recent publications include *Building and Maintaining Multischool Networks: Lessons Learned from the Catholic Schools* and *Final Report on the Seattle Public Schools 1991 All Graduate Study*

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